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Publishing the Truth, From Good Motives and For Justifiable Ends

Nine faculty resign from Hamilton; resignees disproportionately women and people of color

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This is Our Hamilton
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Mariam Durrani
ANTHROPOLOGY
SPRING 2022
F/R 1p-2p
or by Zoom
Dear Hamilton, FUCK THYSELF
FUCK THE PATRIARCHY
You changed our lives!!
LEGEND
TREAT YOUR POC FACULTY BETTER
DON'T BAN THE AHI
The students of Hamilton are, I'm serving
SLAY
You taught us
Change is possible
WE STAND WITH YOU!
BADASS
BETTER
DO BETTER
WE SUPPORT YOU!
Protect POC
KEEP HAMILTON ACCOUNTABLE
Thank you for speaking
POWER
Hypocrite
You deserve BETTER!!
we stand with you!!
KEEP SLAYING QUEEN
Yass Queen
POC PROFS MATTER!
Thank you for stepping up
Keep holding admin accountable!
Diversity Matters
WE STAND With YOU!!!
Thrive in DC
Hamilton needs to be exciting to
HELD HAMILTON ACCOUNTABLE
Have with you
WE STAND with You!
Fuck all racists
Many You Always SLAY
I stand With You!!
Thank you for your STRENGTH
Hamilton Students Support POC
Support POC Faculty + student needs!!!
Hamilton to Better!!!
We support you!
We support you!! Thanks for your work
We support you!
We stand with you!
We support you!
We support you!
We stand with you!!
We support you!
We stand with you!!
We support you!
We stand with you!

rience as a faculty of color at Hamilton College," said Professor Chaudhuri. Professors Burson and Willcoxon both cited moving closer to family as the driving force of their resignation. "I am, I would have to say, an outlier in my resignation because it is for such a personal reason v. institutional reason," remarked Professor Willcoxon. Without dismissing individual nuance, the fact remains: a disproportionate number of faculty members who have resigned from Hamilton College in recent years are women and people of color.

Professor Chandrasekaran acknowledged the varying personal reasons for the resignations, but argued this should not distract from Hamilton's shortcomings, "Even though each of these are very particular and they should not just be blended together, we can understand them as a mirror of Hamilton, and of what Hamilton is failing at. [The variety of reasons for resignation] reveal the breadth of mistakes Hamilton has made."

Hiring Practices and Tokenization

As Dean of Faculty, Dean Keen oversees the faculty hiring process. When she was hired in 2018, Dean Keen received a "clear charge" from the College to further diversify the faculty. Between 2010 and 2019, the percentage of faculty of color increased from 18.8% to 23%, and over the last 10 years, tenure-track hires have been 65% women and 40% people of color. Professors that *The Spectator* interviewed, however, felt tokenized at Hamilton.

"This obsession with numbers is one of the most facile and superficial ways that one can engage with diversity"
- Professor Priya Chandrasekaran

Professor Durrani experienced tokenization at a Common Ground event. "I was invited to the dinner with Condoleezza Rice and Susan Rice, but no other events. And when I [went] to that dinner, it was all women of color [there]. Oh, we were invited for the pictures," they realized, "because the speakers were also Black women"

"The burden of being a token is, it's like wearing a lead coat everywhere all the time. It is so fucking heavy," Professor Chandrasekaran disclosed.

Some professors suspect Hamilton values diversity only as it relates to their demographic statistics. "This obsession with numbers is one of the most facile and superficial ways that one can engage with diversity," said Professor Chandrasekaran. "Diversity matters. [but] let's define why it matters," said Professor Manning. "Does it matter, just in terms of stats and like numbers of people or does it actually matter, because it's a qualitative, relational community that's built on moral principles?"

In line with Professor Manning, Professor Chandrasekaran felt that Hamilton dismissed professors' experiences and scholarship in moments when diverse perspectives were most needed, "It's kind of incredible to me that…after George Floyd's murder and the Black Lives Matter protests…there was never a faculty meeting, or time we all got together and [Hamilton] said, 'We want to hear from faculty of color. Let's have an open forum, what does it feel like to be here? What can we do?'"

Professor Durrani, who has published autoethnographic research on their experience at Hamilton, felt the College disrespected them by hiring outside consultants for an audit rather than turning to the scholars on campus. "You have anthropologists here who've literally done research on your institution, what if you were to just read some of this stuff?"

When Professor Chandrasekaran announced her resignation, the College had no reaction."Do you know that when I left, there was no exit interview with the Dean, nothing was done. Except for a couple of individual exchanges. There was no formal program gathering to say goodbye or discuss the place of Environmental Justice and social justice in the program. It was literally utter silence." For Professor Chandrasekaran, this experience confirmed her feelings of tokenization. "The only reason Hamilton wanted me was for what is replaceable in me, you will, you can, find another even better faculty of color."

Is Central New York the Problem?

According to the Esquilin report, Hamilton College, "acknowledged that it is difficult to attract diverse faculty to a small college in a remote location."

"It's a very, very white area," said Dean Keen, hypothesizing why faculty of color may feel out of place at Hamilton. Census data shows that in 2021, Oneida County was 86% white and Clinton, NY was 94% white.

Location played no role in Professor Manning's decision to resign. He speculated that Hamilton uses its rural location to scapegoat their broader retention issues. "There's an easy cop out answer, which is, well, we live in Central New York, no one wants to live here…But take me, that wasn't a factor…Like you actually had someone who was willing to stay here, you know, just on better terms," said Professor Manning.

Despite noting the whiteness of the region, Dean Keen herself was hesitant to blame the resignations solely on Hamilton's location. "I think there's often a habit that we have of explaining away. We say, 'Oh, well, you know, if that person is leaving because they want to be with their family, there's nothing we could have done about that. And at a basic level, that's true…but I don't think that means that we should stop asking the question, because the pattern remains nonetheless," explained Dean Keen.

Professor Durrani wishes Hamilton had been transparent about the challenges they might face in Clinton. In their first semester at Hamilton, Professor Durrani's daughter experienced a racist incident in the Clinton public school system. After the local public school failed to adequately respond, Professor Durrani moved their daughter to a private school in Syracuse. "Me and [my partner] would drive her every single day from Clinton to Syracuse, and basically spend the whole day hanging out somewhere in Syracuse, and then picking her up and driving her back." Professor Durrani later had conversations with other faculty of color whose children had also struggled in the Clinton public school system. "I felt like if I had known [before arriving], I would have lived in Syracuse," expressed Professor Durrani.

Both Professor Chandrasekaran and Professor Durrani brought up the importance of having strong marital hire programs for faculty of color living in white, rural areas. "I'm partnered, so I actually had someone who was incredible moral support. But I can just imagine if I was a single person moving here…it could have been very destabilizing," said Professor Chandrasekaran.

Professor Chandrasekaran stressed that location had nothing to do with her decision to resign. "When I came to Hamilton, did I say, 'this is the middle of nowhere, and there's no way I'm staying?' No. My partner [and I] came thinking, if we love it, we're gonna buy a farm and we're staying. We're gonna grow shit and live here. We didn't leave because we didn't like Central New York."

"The intention wasn't to work at [at Hamilton], and then try to go on to better things...there was another party pushing, pushing us out"
- Professor Alex Manning

Other Opportunites?

Next year, Professor Manning will start as a researcher and lecturer at Yale University's Sociology Department. Professor Manning's partner, Professor Karakaya, will start as an assistant professor in the same department. While these are prestigious positions, Professor Manning maintained that the two of them would have preferred to obtain more secure positions at Hamilton. "The intention wasn't to work [at Hamilton], and then try to go on to better things…there was another party pushing, pushing [us] out." Professors Manning and Karakaya began applying to other jobs across the country when Hamilton indicated they could not ensure a long-term appointment, or an opportunity to apply for a tenure-track assistant professor position for Professor Karakaya. "I started applying as a way to hopefully encourage the College, because that's kind of the norm in

academia…You have to threaten to leave most of the time before the institution responds to your needs." Securing Yale jobs failed to encourage Hamilton to provide Professors Manning and Karakaya with new offers, and so the two chose to leave.

Dean Keen views the two's resignation as evidence of their ability to secure prestigious work. "One of the people who's leaving this year is going to an Ivy League job. And his partner is also going to an Ivy League job. When you see people who are thriving at that level, early in their careers, making a move to a spectacularly impressive job, that's a loss for us no question."

Professor Wall is "leaving for a simple reason, which is that I need job security." As a Visiting Assistant Professor at Hamilton, Professor Wall was not on the tenure-track. In August 2022 she will start as an Assistant Professor of History at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA, a tenure-track position.

Professors Chandrasekaran and Durrani maintain that job security had no bearing on their decision to resign. "One of the reasons that I made [my resignation] public [was] because I didn't want it to be that I left and then there's a story of like, 'Oh, she just didn't make it or something.' I actually worked really hard while I was at Hamilton. And I feel sad that I'm walking away from all of that. But at the same time, I know, it's probably the best decision for me." Professor Durrani was hired on a tenure-track, and Professor Chandrasekaran was not interested in a tenure-track position. "I wouldn't have thrived in that tenure-track job," said Professor Chandrasekaran, "I can't go through the social reality of what it means to get tenure at Hamilton."

Professor Chandrasekaran hopes her story will not be remembered as her embracing new opportunities. "This is the one thing Hamilton doesn't get. The only reason why, for example, you're interviewing me, is because so many people had to happen to resign at one time. If that hadn't happened, my story would completely be written into the narrative of 'Oh, isn't it great that you found a job at Juilliard?' But no, I had to look for a job elsewhere, because deep down I knew life at Hamilton was not going to be sustainable for me."

Alienation, Unhappiness, Lack of Support

At the March 1st meeting of the Hamilton Faculty, Dean Keen discussed the annual faculty reports. She said "faculty at every career stage report[ed] that they are at the end of their tethers… many of you–many of us–are beyond exhausted. Some report really hitting the wall."

"The morale among the faculty of Hamilton is in a ditch," asserted Professor Haley. Professor Manning echoed, "I think the level of stress and anxiety is undersold here."

This unhappiness appears most salient amongst faculty of color. "As a woman of color, I see that ... women of color don't seem very happy here. Am I going to be happy here?" asked Professor Durrani.

Professor Chandrasekaran also noticed a pattern of unhappiness amongst their peers. "Many of the people I could relate to and whose politics center social justice are miserable to some degree at Hamilton... so where does that leave me? It leaves me in a position of being surrounded by chronic unhappiness or being completely alone."

Professor Chandrasekaran felt alone as the only faculty of color and only scholar teaching on racial justice in the Environmental Studies department. "Peter Cannavò was a great source of support. But there was no colleague in [my department] with whom I could just freely share my experience because I was the only person of color... I was on an island by myself."

Dean Keen insisted that "we actually are very generous in our faculty support, and the faculty run an admirable mentoring program for one another." But not all faculty felt this support. "When I was recruited, I was not given a mentor who was a faculty of color, I had to find a lot of people myself to set up those relationships," Professor Durrani lamented.

"I see that...women of color don't seem very happy here. Am I going to be happy here?"

- Professor Mariam Durrani

The Invisible Labor of Mentoring Students and Fellow Faculty

While they themselves feel a lack of support from the College, faculty of color often also adopt the additional labor of emotionally supporting both each other and their students of color. "The amount of time I would spend every week just calling, talking to someone who was upset because of something that happened at Hamilton… dealing with certain students who might have said something racist to them and knowing they didn't have support," said Professor Chandrasekaran. Professor Haley related to this experience as well. "Every year, predominantly, students of color would walk into my office and say 'please stay until I graduate... please stay,' until it's added up to 32 years."

The Esquilin Report had similar findings. "Due in part to the perceived scarcity of administrative/counseling support services geared towards BIPOC students, BIPOC faculty often spend a disproportionate amount of time and energy supporting these students within their departments. For many students, these faculty have become their lifelines in helping them navigate the racial dynamics within the academic environment and the primary reason why many remain in school."

The interviewees noted that they expected to take on this additional role at a predominately white institution and that much of this work was voluntary and rewarding. Rather, it was the invisible nature of this labor that frustrated them.

"I would see the hours and hours that my colleagues of color put into mentoring students …All of that is completely invisible, completely invisible in the tenure process," Professor Haley explained. "It came at a cost emotionally, yes, but also professionally, because if you're spending six hours with a student? That's six hours you could have spent researching that article that you promised somebody."

Professor Haley continued, "To the junior faculty of color that I mentored, I will always say, you have to accept this as a fact of life... You're going to have to be twice as good to get half as far," said Professor Haley. "That's it. I know it's not fair. It's not right. But you just have to accept it. You will save yourself a lot of pain and frustration if you just accept that."

Harassment in the Workplace

The Esquilin Report found that "a number of participants focused on a lack of clear protocol, policies, and structures for reporting bias... This lack of clarity left participants feeling powerless and unsupported, and fueled their general impression that the college is more interested in symbolic inclusive rhetoric, and not in seriously addressing these issues."

Professor Durrani summarized their experience in the letter of resignation they posted outside of their office door in the Kirner-Johnson (KJ) Building: "As a tenure-track woman of color faculty member, my employment at the College has been profoundly shaped by: 1) a pattern of targeted harassment by right wing elements in and around the College, and 2) a pattern of institutional inaction when I have raised these concerns."

Multiple right wing media outlets targeted Professor Durrani, including FrontPage Mag (FPM), Campus Reform and Campus Watch. Professor Durrani outlines their harassment in detail both in their letter of resignation and in their article, "Digital Infrastructures of the Internet Outrage Machine: An Autoethnography of Targeted Faculty Harassment."

In 2018, Resident Fellow of the Alexander Hamilton Institute for the Study of Western Civilization (AHI) Mary Grabar published "How Hamilton Defines 'Academic Rigor'" in FrontPage Mag. Using biographical information from the Hamilton College website, Grabar explicitly named Professor Durrani, writing, "Over in the Anthropology Department, recent tenure-track hire Mariam Durrani is praised for incorporating 'feminist and decolonial methodologies' in [their] research on 'Muslim youth and communities, cultural mobilities, higher education in Pakistan and the United States, race, gender, and migration studies'—as well as [their] use of multimedia and for being 'a committed social-justice advocate.'" Campus Reform targeted Professor Durrani in a 2019 story titled "Drag queen PROF 'brings the

nightclub to the classroom'" which included the details of a campus event featuring Tufts University linguistics professor and part-time drag queen La Whore Vagistan. Professor Durrani only shared the event with the Hamilton community — suggesting that whoever forwarded the event information to Campus Reform had access to a Hamilton email account.

Professor Durrani suspected that an affiliate of the AHI was responsible for sharing the event email with Campus Reform. The AHI is the brainchild of former Hamilton Professor Robert L. Paquette, who described himself as an "out-of-closet conservative" in The New Criterion Magazine.

Paquette, who now serves as the President and Executive Director of the AHI, denied these allegations. "Durrani flatters [themself] if [they] think either the Alexander Hamilton Institute or its undergraduate fellows program has [them] on our radar screen," wrote Paquette in an email to *The Spectator.* Adding, "the smearing of AHI by activists allied with [Professor Durrani] has resulted in a fundraising bonanza for us" and that once professors engage in "activism (seeing no difference between it and scholarship), they become fair game."

The Spectator found multiple examples of Paquette criticizing "shallow and trendy programming driven by activist faculty." A 2002 issue of The Continental states "the Womyn's Center invited Annie Sprinkle, a self-described prostitute-porn star turned sexologist, to campus for a lecture on sex toys. Paquette protested the lecture, stating that it violated New York State obscenity laws. 'Academic freedom is not an absolute,' stated Paquette in a September 25, 2002 interview with the Associated Press. 'I would have to conclude that this administration is both intellectually and morally vapid.'" Campus Reform has interviewed Paquette a number of times, including for an article titled "Hamilton College to institute diversity requirement."

When Professor Durrani went to the Hamilton administration for support, they allege that administrators told them the incidents were "episodic" and did not meet the legal standard of "severe and persistent."

When asked about Hamilton's faculty harassment policy, Dean Keen answered "we offer support, rich and warm support, personal support, legal support, and investigation. If investigation is warranted, for any faculty member who is experiencing unwanted attention for their identity or their work," She continued that "people are not aware of how much [faculty harassment] happens." Dean Keen would not speak with *The Spectator* on private personnel issues or "at all about anything that happened with Mariam Durrani."

As such, *The Spectator* cannot confirm the extent to which the College investigated Professor Durrani's claims. Professor Durrani alleges that Hamilton College never investigated their online harassment.

Faculty reports of harassment are not new, either. In 1989, Professor Haley attempted to resign during her first semester after two students (X and Y) targeted her in the classroom.

During a midterm review session, when Professor Haley declined to provide exam questions verbatim, "Student Y shout[ed] out. 'What exactly are your credentials to teach this? And I said, 'What?' She said, 'Well, we all know that, you know, Hamilton's on this affirmative action push. So I just want to know what your credentials are,'" recounted Professor Haley.

This interaction was the final straw for Haley, who had endured snide comments and poor classroom etiquette from X and Y all semester. "So I go back to my office [and] I wrote my letter of resignation. And I went over to the Dean of the Faculty … I handed it to the receptionist and said, 'I'm gone. I'm outta here.'"

Former Dean of Faculty Eugene Tobin, who would later become president of the College, did not accept Professor Haley's letter. Rather, he asked her to give him a chance to fix the problem. "I don't know, maybe 45 minutes later, there's a knock on my door. And it's these two students. And they're both in tears." The students told Haley they had been charged with apologizing to her under threat of expulsion.

"You end up with that silly Advisory [Council]...It's a bandaid...And underneath this band aid is a really festering sore that goes very deep."

- Professor Shelly Haley

"And so, here they are. I mean, literally, sobbing outside [my] door. And so I said, 'Well, in my mind, this really isn't an apology. This is [you being] coerced into doing this with the threat of expulsion. And somehow this rings hollow.'"

Professor Haley described the threat of expulsion as "a bit stiff," and allowed the students to remain in her class with the understanding their behavior must improve. She also agreed to stay on the faculty "on the condition that none of my course evaluations for this semester will go into my tenure file," to which Dean Tobin agreed. "I think if I had been a novice teacher, if I hadn't had experience teaching other places and knowing how to stop this kind of dynamic before it spreads, I think I probably would have left academia," recalled Professor Haley.

Professor Manning never encountered hostility akin to some of his colleagues, "I didn't get overt insults. I didn't have white supremacists doxxing me. I was lucky." However, he maintained that "the College is not recognizing how hostile the environment can be."

Strategies to Improve Retainment

In light of the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020, President Wippman sent a brief email to the Hamilton community on June 19, 2020 announcing the formation of a new Advisory Council as part of the College's commitment "to taking its own actions against racism and discrimination." When Professor Haley saw the announcement, she quickly requested to be on the Advisory Council. President Wippman denied Professor Haley's request, writing "I wasn't able to include everyone who expressed interest in being a member of the Advisory Council." Professor Haley posted her interaction with President Wippman on Facebook. What followed was an outpouring of anger at the Hamilton administration from alumni, students, and student organizations including the Hamilton College Feminists of Color Collective (FCC) and the Black and Latinx Student Union (BLSU). BLSU created an online petition which gained 1,654 signatures criticizing the College's leadership and calling for, amongst other things, the dissolution of the Advisory Council and an apology to Professor Haley. Despite criticism, President Wippman continued on with the Advisory Council as planned.

One tangible product of the Advisory Council, however, was an audit Hamilton commissioned from an outside consultant: the Esquilin Report. The audit attracted skepticism, and many, including Professors Chandrasekaran, Durrani and Haley, boycotted it all together. The final report acknowledged its low participation rates and the Advisory Council's lacking credibility, stating "participants generally expressed a deep mistrust of the Advisory Council, and by extension, the [Esquilin] listening sessions."

The Esquilin Report and *The Spectator's* interviewees had numerous ideas on how Hamilton might better support female faculty and faculty of color. Some of the most common suggestions included cluster hiring faculty of color, increasing the proportion of tenure-track hires, providing comprehensive support during relocation and mentorship upon arrival.

"They have to hire more people at stable long term positions, rather than have this large chunk of visiting professors," argued Professor Manning. Professor Wall agrees, "Temporary positions like Visiting Assistant Professors or adjuncts are problematic. It's sad that professors in these roles leave often... I am not a person of color, so I cannot speak to the experiences of my colleagues of color who have resigned. However, I would note that faculty of color are disproportionately likely to be contingent, so solving a lack of representation is inextricably linked to reducing precarity."

Some of the faculty interviewees felt that what Hamilton needs is a larger institutional shift. "I don't think it's about figuring out what little bureaucratic thing or what process can change," insisted Professor Chandrasekaran, "It's moral, it's about will, it's about someone holding the administration to task. it's about us asking ourselves, asking students at Hamilton, asking faculty, what is this place? What do we want it to be?"

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